

Legislative Ethics Board

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BOARD MEMBERS:

Laurie Dolan
Sen. Chris Gildon
Rep. David Hackney
Larry Hoff
Sen. Jamie Pedersen
Pam Tajima Praeger
Jessica Roberts
Rep. Mike Steele
Lynda Wilson



LEGISLATIVE ETHICS BOARD MINUTES February 21, 2025

Present were: Pam Tajima Praeger, Vice-Chair; Sen. Jamie Pedersen; Sen. Chris Gildon; Rep. Mike Steele (virtual); Larry Hoff; Laurie Dolan; Jennifer Strus, Board Counsel; Ohad Lowy, House Counsel

The Vice-chair called the meeting to order at 12:07 pm.

The minutes for the December 15, 2024 Board meeting were approved.

The election of officers for 2025 was held. Senator Gildon nominated Larry Hoff as Chair and Laurie Dolan as Vice-Chair. They were unanimously elected.

There were six Employment Disclosure forms to review. The following persons filed the forms because their spouses are employed by a state agency: Brad Snyder, Computer Systems Facilitator; Grayson Scherz, Customer Support Facilitator; Nicholas Byers, IT Customer Support Temp; Jeffrey Breshears, CHST Team Lead; Jade McDaniels, IT Portfolio Manager; and Esther Jones, HDC Legislative Assistant Supervisor. The Board found no conflicts with the information submitted.

Board counsel discussed the draft 2024 Annual Report. The Board approved the draft report subject to non-substantive edits. Board counsel was directed to send out the report, with edits due by February 28th.

Board counsel then discussed the tradition in the Senate of new members passing out gifts to the other members in celebration of having their first bill passed. The question that has arisen is whether public funds can be used to purchase the gift. The Board indicated that it did not think public funds should be used to purchase the gifts nor should members solicit lobbyists or their employers to purchase the gifts. The board discussed whether this issue should be discussed in an Ethics Alert but decided that it should be noted in the 2025 *Ethics Manual* update.

Board counsel reported that the ethics bill (SSB 5143) is currently in the Senate Rules Committee. Sen. Pedersen explained the agreed upon amendments to the bill that will take place on the floor. He did confirm that the immunity language which was removed in committee would not be added back in. He also stated that the House was planning to consider some language related to social media.

Board counsel raised the issue of the many social media questions the ethics advisers receive and whether the provisions in the Stambaugh case should be revisited. Sen. Pedersen recommended that the Board not take any action until it sees what social media amendments the House has in mind.

Board counsel discussed the Advisory Opinion request received from Ohad Lowy, House Counsel regarding the payment with public funds to develop various stickers for legislators. Member Dolan indicated she did not think public funds should be spent on stickers as it is something that is more akin to campaign type work. Board counsel was asked to draft an advisory opinion to be discussed at the next Board meeting.


Board counsel explained the questions asked in the Advisory Opinion request received from John Handy and Kim Wirtz. The questions are whether legislative staff can “like” a caucus post on social media and whether legislative staff can freely engage with caucus social media if the post is not related to legislation. Board counsel was asked to draft an advisory opinion to be discussed at the next Board meeting.

Board counsel discussed the next meeting date for the Board. Board counsel is to suggest some dates in late March and early April.

There was no public testimony.

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 12:31 pm.

Executive session began at 12:41pm and adjourned at 12:51pm.



Larry Hoff, Chair

Date: 3/31/25

The entirety of the public portion of this meeting can be viewed on TVW at the attached link <https://tvw.org/video/legislative-ethics-board-2025021179/?eventID=2025021179>